

TONGASS NARROWS
VOLUNTARY WATERWAY GUIDE
Est. February 28, 1999

The Tongass Narrows Voluntary Waterway Guide is intended for use by all vessel operators when transiting Tongass Narrows from the intersection of Nichols Passage and Revillagagedo Channel on the Southeastern most end to Guard Island on the Northwest end of the narrows. The members of the Tongass Narrows Work Group, which included representatives from the following waterway user groups, developed this guide in an effort to enhance the safety of navigation on this congested waterway:

United States Coast Guard
Federal Aviation Administration
Southeast Alaska Pilots Association
Alaska Coastwise Pilots Association
Southeast Alaska Stevedoring
Commercial and private floatplane operators
Commercial Kayak Operators
Commercial freight transporters
Pennock-Gravina Island Association
Charter vessel operators
Recreational boat operators
Local City-Borough
Waterfront Facility Operators
Commercial fishing interests
Alaska Marine Highway System

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U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Detachment
2030 Sealevel Drive, Suite 203
Ketchikan, AK 99901
(907) 225-4496

Disclaimer
February 28, 1999

The Tongass Narrows Work Group's Tongass Narrows Waterway User Guide provides suggestions and recommended guidelines that are intended to assist persons operating vessels on Tongass Narrows, regardless of the type of vessel.

This guide is meant to complement and not replace the federal and state laws and regulations that govern maritime traffic on the narrows. Prudent mariners should not rely on the guide as their only source of information about vessel traffic patterns and safe navigation practices in Tongass Narrows, and should comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

Vessel operating parameters and maritime conditions on Tongass Narrows constantly change. The Tongass Narrows Work Group and its members; expressly disclaim any liability or responsibility, direct or indirect, which may arise from the use of the Guide, or reliance upon any information or recommendations in the Guide, by any person or entity

TONGASS NARROWS VOLUNTARY

WATERWAY GUIDE

Description: Tongass Narrows is a “Y” shaped body of water that stretches from Nichols Passage on the Southeast end to Guard Island on the North. Tongass Narrows is approximately 13 nautical miles in length and at its narrowest point is only about a ¼ of a nautical mile wide. The narrows is bounded on the eastern side by Revillagagedo Island and by Gravina Island on the west. The narrows is oriented in a southeast to northwesterly direction and is spilt into two channels in the Southeastern most third of the narrows by Pennock Island. The cities of Saxman and Ketchikan lie along the eastern side of Tongass Narrows.

Reason/Purpose: The reason for the development of this voluntary waterway user guide is the high volume and variety of traffic that transits Tongass Narrows during the summer months. On an average summer day, traffic on the narrows consists of: 500+ floatplane landings and takeoffs; 173 charter boat transits; 22 small passenger vessels; 4-6 large (can be as high as 7) Cruise ships with 1-2 at anchor; 150 Fishing vessels at 7 canneries; 3-5 barge/tug transits; 30-40 kayaks; and an unknown number of recreational and transient boat traffic.

Because of the high volume of traffic, the geography of Tongass Narrows, and the multiple directions of travel, it is vital that operators on Tongass Narrows (both first time and experienced) adhere to all navigation safety regulations and follow as closely as possible, the suggested operating guidelines found in this guide.

Primary Waterway Users/Background: Tongass Narrows is home to a large variety of traffic ranging from some of the largest Cruise Ships in the world to Kayaks. Types of vessels operating on the narrows include: Recreational Vessels, Passenger Vessels, Commercial Fishing Vessels, Commercial Freight Vessels/Barges, Commercial Tank Barges, Kayaks, Floatplanes, Charter Vessels and Passenger Ferries.

Ketchikan is considered a gateway city for fishing vessels engaged in Alaskan Fisheries. These vessels proceed from Washington and Oregon to the all areas of Alaska via Ketchikan, which serves as a major refueling/replenishing port for these vessels. Ketchikan has a long tradition of high volume commercial and recreational fisheries for several species of salmon. Each summer, Tongass Narrows plays hosts to hundreds of commercial fishing vessels that are plying the waters of Southeast Alaska. Ketchikan has several shore based fish processing facilities.

The Charter fishing industry is also active in Ketchikan. With a fleet of several hundred charter boats and a customer base provided in a large part by the numerous cruise ship visits, the charter industry is a major player on the narrows. These charter vessels are either fishing in the narrows or transiting the narrows enroute to the fishing grounds. Add to this the large number of recreational fishing boats, the four to five cruise ships

visits a day and an estimated 500 plus floatplane landings and take-offs and you have the makings for a very busy congested waterway.

Navigational Restrictions

For a detailed description of the navigational restrictions on Tongass Narrows, see the **COAST PILOT 8**. This volume of the COAST PILOT gives a complete and adequate description of Tongass Narrows from the North Entrance of Nichols Passage to Guard Island. Generally, the more restricted areas of Tongass Narrows are:

- 1) West Channel, Tongass Narrows, vicinity Clam Cove. The West Channel of Tongass Narrows is that area that is bounded by Gravina Island on the west and Pennock Island on the east.
- 2) East Channel from Idaho Rock to CG Base. The East Channel of Tongass Narrows lies between Pennock Island on the West and Revillagagedo Island on the east.
- 3) North Channel from Danger Island to South End of Bar Harbor

Military Presence: The City of Ketchikan is a permanent home to approximately 300 Active Duty Coast Guard members. The Coast Guard Cutters ACHUSNET, and NAUSHON are homeported in Ketchikan. The Coast Guard Cutter ANTHONY PETIT will be homeported in Ketchikan in late 1999. Ketchikan is also home to the Integrated Support Command, Station Ketchikan, Electronic Support Unit Ketchikan, Marine Safety Detachment Ketchikan, a Pacific Area Armory Detachment, and Loran Station Shoal Cove.

Archeological/Cultural Potential

The Alaskan Native culture has played an important part in the history of this area. Tongass Narrows has several areas that celebrate this history. Chief among these is the City of Saxman and Totem-Bight State Park. Many of the totems at Saxman can be viewed from the water as one transits through the east channel of Tongass Narrows.

Annual Marine Events:

During the summer months, the Ketchikan Yacht Club holds sailboat regattas on each Wednesday night and on some weekends. These races are registered as marine events and these events are published in the local Notice to Mariners. There are no special navigation regulations created for these events. In May, the City of Ketchikan hosts the "Celebration of the Sea" week celebration. The festival celebrates the vital part the maritime community plays in the life of Ketchikan. There is also an Annual Fourth of July fireworks display. This display is a popular event and can involve several hundred-spectator vessels.

Regulated Navigation Areas:

The following regulated navigation areas are in effect on Tongass Narrows:

- 1) 33 CFR 110.231, Ketchikan Harbor, Alaska, Large Passenger Vessel Anchorage (previously 33 C.F.R. 165.1705, Ketchikan Harbor, Ketchikan Alaska - Safety Zone). This regulation defines an anchorage area in which no vessel, other than a large passenger vessel of over 1600 gross tons, may anchor without the express consent of the Captain of the Port Southeast Alaska. This regulation also requires all vessels using propulsion machinery to proceed through the anchorage by the most direct route and without unnecessary delay and prohibits sudden course changes.
- 2) 33 C.F.R. 165.1708, Tongass Narrows, Ketchikan, Alaska - Safety Zone. This regulation designates a safety zone for the annual fireworks display on the fourth of July.
- 3) 33 C.F.R. 162.240, Tongass Narrows, Ketchikan, Alaska; navigation. This regulation establishes a maximum speed limit of 7 knots for vessels of over 26 ft in length in Tongass Narrows.

There is no type of vessel traffic control system in affect for Tongass Narrows.

Pollution Response/Salvage Companies:

- 1) Alaska Commercial Divers (907)247-0771
- 2) Alaska Diving Services (907)225-3667
- 3) SEAPRO - (907)225-7002

Federal Pilotage Requirements:

For information on Pilotage requirements see COAST PILOT 8. As a general rule all U.S. Vessels over 300 Gross Tons must have a federally licensed Pilot onboard or must have a federal pilotage endorsement on their license for these waters. For non-U.S. flagged vessels over 300 Gross Tons, you must meet all applicable Alaska State Pilotage Rules.

U. S. Customs Service Requirements:

As a general rule, all persons entering U. S. waters from Canadian waters, after having stopped in Canada, are subject to all applicable customs regulations. To arrange for a U. S. Customs Service inspection, to notify the U. S. Customs Service of your arrival, or to get further information on this topic, you may contact the U. S. Customs Office at (907) 225-2254.

GENERAL OPERATING GUIDELINES FOR ALL VESSELS OPERATING ON TONGASS NARROWS

The items listed below are suggested guidelines (in bullet form) for operations on Tongass Narrows. This section is followed by user specific guidelines. These guidelines are **not** all-inclusive. These are suggested procedures designed to enhance the safety of all persons operating vessels of any type on Tongass Narrows.

Note: A “vessel” is defined by the navigation rules as “every description of water craft, including nondisplacement craft and seaplanes, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water.”

The chartlets used in this guide illustrated suggested or preferred operational areas but are not all-inclusive. Mariners should be aware of this and should maintain their vigilance when transiting Tongass Narrows.

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

- All vessels are required to operate in accordance with the International Regulations for Prevention of Collisions at Sea, 1972 (72 COLREGS) when transiting Tongass Narrows, as on all Alaskan waters.
- All vessels equipped with a VHF Marine band radio should monitor channel 16 when underway. Channel 13 should also be monitored if available. It is the policy of cruise ships and other large commercial vessels including tugs and tow and Marine Highway vessels to give “securite” calls on Channels 16 and 13, fifteen minutes prior to getting underway and at prescribed call points while transiting. Only concerned vessels affected should respond to these security calls. Proper and respectful use of the VHF radio is an effective tool in communications, which is essential for this waterway to run efficiently and safely.
- **All mariners are responsible for the wake created by their vessel.** If your vessel causes a dangerous or damaging wake, in addition to civil fines, you may be held liable for damages resulting from that wake.
- When transiting Tongass Narrows, please exercise caution, maintain extra vigilance and be courteous. Unlike other waterways, on Tongass Narrows you must also remember to scan the sky, as there is a constant stream of floatplanes landing and taking off on these waters.
- For moorage information, you may contact the local harbormaster’s office on VHF Channel 73, or you may call them at 228-5632.
- On the inside of the back cover of this guide is a chartlet showing some of the suggested operating areas for various user groups. There is also a chartlet in each section for that specific waterway user. Please become familiar with these suggested operating areas prior to operating your vessel on the narrows.

Because of the high volume and variety of traffic and the multiple directions of travel, it is vitally important for all vessel operators to follow the suggested operating procedures outlined in this guide when travelling on Tongass Narrows.

FISHING VESSELS:

- Fishing vessel operators should be cognizant of their wake at all times while transiting Tongass Narrows. This is especially critical when around kayakers or in the vicinity of the floatplane facilities. Remember, if your vessel causes a dangerous or damaging wake, you may be held accountable for any damage that is caused by your vessel's wake as well as be subject to a fine.
- There is no designated fishing vessel anchorage. Fishing vessels wishing to anchor in Tongass Narrows should try to anchor in the old “C-3” area, which is located between East Clump and Clam Cove, near Gravina Island. These areas are shaded on the attached chartlet at the end of this section.
- If you anchor in the east channel of Tongass Narrows in front of the canneries and facilities, you must maintain a radio watch and should coordinate your anchoring with the canneries and facilities so as to not impede access to the shore facilities
- When at anchor, all vessels should display the appropriate lights or dayshapes. Care should also be taken to ensure you do not encroach upon the main channel and thus cause a hazard to navigation.
- Regardless of where you anchor, care must be taken to not impede navigation in the channel and to not block access to any waterfront facilities.
- Try to limit the use of your Halogen Deck lights at night as they can obscure the lights from navigation aids and make it more difficult for transiting traffic.
- The following is a list of waterfront facilities and their contact numbers

Table 1

<u>ID Number</u>	<u>Name of Facility</u>	<u>Phone Number</u>
1	Petro Marine Service	225-2106
2	Tesoro	225-4176
3	Northland Services	225-2480
4	Kanaway Seafoods	225-3166
5	Alaska General Processors	225-2906
6	Anderes Oil	225-2163
7	Trident Seafoods	243-3166

The chartlet used in this section is not all-inclusive. It serves only as an illustration of the suggested operational guidelines for this user group.

CRUISE SHIP OPERATIONS:

- Whenever possible, Cruise ships should anchor in the primary anchorage illustrated on the attached chartlet. Anchoring in this area will enable a cruise ship to have the maximum swing area and will help to ease congestion in the east channel of Tongass Narrows.
- When using tenders to lighter passengers, all cruise ships are reminded that they need to be very cognizant of the wake created by the tenders. A wake of 12 inches can cause problems for floatplanes landing and taking off. Given the proximity of the cruise ship anchorage to the float plane operations area, extreme care needs to be exercised.
- Tenders should cross the narrows in a direct line from the cruise ship to their shoreside destination. This will help to reduce the amount of congestion in the narrows and your exposure to the floatplanes. This suggested traffic pattern is illustrated on the attached chartlet.
- Tender operators should be able to communicate effectively in English and should monitor VHF Channels 16 and 13 for other marine traffic at all times.
- Inbound and outbound cruise ships must be cognizant of their wake and any potential damage their wake may cause. This is especially true when in the vicinity of Lewis Reef and Peninsula Point. **This is applicable to all cruise ships regardless of size.**

The chartlet used in this section is not all-inclusive. It serves only as an illustration of the suggested operational guidelines for this user group.

FLOAT PLANE OPERATIONS:

- Floatplane operators are reminded that when the plane is on the water it is considered a vessel and is subject to the International Navigation Regulations (72 COLREGS). As the operator of a floatplane, you are reminded that under the 72 COLREGs, floatplanes on the water shall, in general, keep well clear of all vessels and avoid impeding their navigation. In circumstances however, where risk of collision exists, she shall comply with the Rules of this Part.
- It is recommended that “Step Taxiing” in floatplanes be minimized. “Idle Taxiing” is preferred.
- Floatplane operators should keep a close eye out for kayaks and other small vessel traffic when landing and taking off.
- When landing and taking off in the vicinity of a cruise ship keep a sharp lookout for vessels that may be screened from your sight by the cruise ship.
- Floatplane operators are encouraged to extend their taxi to the west when operating under the East Wind Pattern. This will aid the pilots in avoiding most of the congestion.
- There is no set distance a floatplane should keep from the waterfront facilities. However, Pilots are reminded that many vessels depart from these facilities and by keeping more to the center of the channel, you will decrease your risk of being surprised by a vessel leaving one of these facilities.
- When using the floatplane facilities at the Ketchikan International Airport, floatplane operators should avoid operating in the vicinity of the airport ferry. The attached chartlet illustrates a suggested landing and take-off zone to the northwest of the floatplane dock. By using this area for your landing and takeoffs, you are helping to ease the congestion in this, the narrowest portion of Tongass Narrows. You are also limiting the amount of vessel traffic that you will have to contend with when using this facility.
- Floatplane operators, when landing or taking off in the vicinity of any vessel should avoid doing so in a manner that will impede or surprise the operator of that vessel.

The chartlet used in this section is not all-inclusive. It serves only as an illustration of the suggested operational guidelines for this user group.

KAYAK OPERATIONS:

- All Kayakers should abide by the “1998 Power Vessel Operator & Kayaker Suggested Guidelines for Safe Operations in Alaska” (Appendix 1 to this guide).

In addition to the guidelines in the above mentioned pamphlet, when on Tongass Narrows, kayak operators should:

- **At no time should kayaks be operated around the stern or bow thruster area of cruise ships preparing to depart the pier.** This is especially critical when ships are preparing to depart their berth or anchorage. Some ships have variable pitch propellers. On these ships, propellers and shafts may be turning even when the vessel is not underway. They may be started up to an hour prior to the vessel getting underway to warm up the engines. Cruise ships when in berth or at anchor, as well as ship’s agents, usually monitor and work on VHF channel 12. Ships or agents may be contacted on channel 12 to verify departure times. Cruise ship pilots give Security calls on channels 16 and 13 approximately 15 minutes prior to getting underway.
- **Kayak operations around any cruise ship should be avoided in the fifteen minutes immediately prior to the cruise ships scheduled departure.** If you are unsure as to the time of the vessel departure, you should contact the vessel and notify them of your intentions.
- Guided Kayak operations should maintain a guide to client ratio of 1 to six, unless a motorized rescue boat accompanies your group.
- When crossing Tongass Narrows, groups of Kayaks should cross in a side by side formation, **not** strung out end to end. When traveling in a group, you will be more visible than when you form a line and you will also limit your exposure to other vessel traffic.
- When crossing from Revillagigedo Island to Pennock Island, you should cross at one of the two suggested crossing corridors depicted on the attached chartlet. One is located to the southeast of the Thomas Basin entrance. The second runs from Hansen Float to the North end of Pennock Island. By transiting across the narrows at these points you will be in an area where cross traffic normally occurs.
- When weather conditions exceed safe operating levels or the skill level of the kayaker, operations should be halted.
- “SECURITE” broadcast should be made when groups are departing Thomas Basin or transiting to or from Pennock Island, to advise marine traffic of your intended route of travel and numbers in your group.
- For Kayakers travelling through Tongass Narrows, we suggest that you stay to the side of the main channel and avoid traveling in the center of the channel whenever possible.
- All Kayakers should be extra vigilant. Because of the low profile of a kayak, it is very difficult for other vessels or floatplanes to detect your presence.

The chartlet used in this section is not all-inclusive. It serves only as an illustration of the suggested operational guidelines for this user group.

KETCHIKAN YACHT CLUB SAILBOAT REGATTAS:

- Two days prior to each race, the sailboat race will be announced in the Events section of the Ketchikan Daily News. This announcement will give the times of the race, the name of the race committee boat if known and a method for contacting the race committee boat. The attached chartlets illustrate the usual routes used for these regattas.
- Whenever possible, races should be held in non-peak operation times for other vessels.
- All races must have an approved “Marine Event Permit” prior to their being conducted.
- Whenever possible, races should be coordinated with the local Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla so they may provide a safety patrol craft for the race.
- Once it is determined a race is going to be conducted, the Race Committee boat should initiate a “SECURITE” broadcast advising marine traffic of the race course, number of vessels participating, and how to contact the committee boat in the event a conflict exist.
- All Race participants equipped with a marine radio should monitor VHF Channels 13 and 16 during the course of the race and are reminded that at all times, they must abide by all applicable navigation safety regulations.
- Mariners wishing to contact the race committee boat may do so on VHF Channel 16, 13 or 69.

The chartlet used in this section is not all-inclusive. It serves only as an illustration of the suggested operational guidelines for this user group.

RECREATIONAL AND CHARTER VESSELS:

- Like all other vessels, recreational and charter vessel operators must comply with all applicable navigation safety regulations, including the 72 COLREGS.
- Vessel operators should ensure they are traveling at a safe speed for the given weather and traffic conditions.
- When transiting perpendicular to the main traffic flow, extra caution should be used. This is especially true if your view of an area is blocked by another vessel, such as a cruise ship at anchor.
- Rapid course changes should be avoided whenever possible.
- If you are transiting through the narrows, you are encouraged to use the West Channel between Pennock and Gravina Islands if at all possible. This will help to reduce the congestion in the East Channel of Tongass Narrows.

PERSONAL WATERCRAFT:

- Although these craft are not restricted in Tongass Narrows, due to the high volume and variety of traffic in Tongass Narrows, mariners wishing to operate personal watercraft should not operate them in Tongass Narrows.
- Personal watercrafts are considered motorized vessels and are subject to all applicable navigation safety regulations. This includes the 72 COLREGS.
- Rapid course changes should be avoided whenever possible.

APPENDIX ONE

1998 POWER VESSEL OPERATOR AND KAYAKER SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR SAFE OPERATIONS IN ALASKA

OVERVIEW: Alaska's coastal communities are connected by thousands of miles of waterways. As Alaska's economy diversifies and develops, more people are and will be using Alaska's coastal waters for business and pleasure. Commercial fishing, sport fishing charters, transportation, large vessel tourism and the sea kayaking industry each contribute millions of dollars annually to Alaska's economy and help to provide economic diversification and stability in small coastal communities. However, with this growth comes increased opportunities for inadvertent adverse impacts between various boating groups. Of particular concern is the possibility of collisions, capsizing or injury to sea kayakers. The Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association with the support of the U.S. Coast Guard held a meeting in Anchorage and decided that increased boater education was one way to help reduce the risk of such an event.

What Kayakers Should Know About Power Vessel Operators:

- When powerboat operators are heading into the sun, it is virtually impossible for them to see kayaks. Powerboat operators rated colliding with a kayak when heading into the sun as the most likely cause of a fatality.
- Kayaks are not visible on radar. Kayakers should not rely on a boat's radar to alert a skipper to their presence.
- When a power vessel traveling at high speeds slows down, it creates a larger wake as the vessel settles into the water.
- Large powerboats and tour-boats can be blown off course by strong winds when traveling too slowly, such as when they must pause in harbor entranceways because kayakers are blocking the passage.
- If a vessel does not respond to your VHF radio call, call again. The vessel operator may have been on the radio to another boat or using the PA system to speak to passengers.

What Power Vessel Operators Should Know About Sea Kayakers:

- Because sea kayakers carry their "life support" systems (food, clothing, tents, sleeping bags, etc.) in their kayaks, a fully loaded kayak may weigh 250 or more pounds. Kayaks and survival equipment are particularly vulnerable to being damaged by large wakes when loading or unloading on a beach as the kayaks cannot be quickly picked up and carried out of the wake zone.
- Wakes breaking onshore against a loaded kayak may push the kayak into a kayaker causing severe injury or a broken leg.
- Kayakers usually travel close to shore to stay out of the way of power vessels. However, large wakes breaking against cliffs give kayakers a "double whammy". First they get the incoming wake, then the refracted wave off the cliff.
- A power vessel with a large wake traveling at high speeds close to sea kayakers can capsize a sea kayak if the kayakers do not have sufficient time to turn "bow-into" the wake.
- In bad weather (winds over 15 knots), kayakers are less likely to be able to maneuver. Giving them room is the best option unless assistance is clearly being requested.

Guidelines for Sea Kayakers:

- Increase your visibility by wearing bright clothing, using a bright (not dark) colored kayak. Paddles with white rather than black blades, and putting reflector tape on your kayak paddles and life jackets. Use of a bicycle flag pole may interfere with your ability to right and climb back into the kayak should you be rolled. Test this in a pool before using.

- Learn the Boating Sound Signals so you can understand a vessel operator's intentions when he gives you a sound signal.
- Carry flares to use in distress.
- Carry a good; water repellent VHF Radio where it is readily available for use. Be aware of large boats and subsequent wakes and avoid landing and launching in a potential surf zone when their wakes are approaching. Use beaches that are protected from possible surf and wake for rest breakers and/or carry your boats up out of the surf zone if possible. When loading or unloading for camp, empty and move the kayaks up the beach as quickly as possible.
- In narrow passages or places where power vessels have limited maneuverability, stay out of the main channel. Do not impede traffic in a harbor or harbor entrances.
- Move into and away from harbor entrances quickly to avoid wakes from vessels accelerating and slowing down.
- If you are traveling in a group and see a vessel approaching, move into a tight group to increase your visibility. Wave your paddles high above your head to alert the vessel operator to your presence.
- If a power vessel approaches you heading into the sun, try waving your paddles high above your head in a back and forward motion to alert them to your presence.
- When rounding blind corners or areas with submerged reefs be aware that boat wakes can be dangerous. Wait until the boat and subsequent wake pass by before proceeding.
- When crossing a passageway or open water, cross in a tight group.
- In areas of high traffic, give a "Security" call on your VHF radio before crossing.

Guidelines for Power Vessel Operators:

- Always travel at a safe speed for the conditions. Reduce speeds when weather conditions or blind corners reduce your visibility. Never travel faster than you are capable of responding to avoid an accident or close encounter.
- Stay sufficiently far away from kayakers that they have time to maneuver "bow-into" your approaching wake.
- On leaving and approaching harbor entrances look for kayakers and plan your acceleration or slowing down so they have time to turn into the wake. Kayaks have been capsized in this situation.
- Avoid traveling close to shore especially around blind corners. Kayakers ranked encountering a vessel rounding a blind corner as the most likely cause of a sea kayaking fatality. When rounding a blind corner in an area sea kayakers use, give one prolonged blast as a warning. Listen to your radio for a response. Take action to avoid close encounter or collision.
- When kayakers are near cliffs, consider reducing your speed well before you reach them to minimize your wake or give the area a wider berth.
- If you inadvertently place a large wake close to kayakers where they may not be able to head "bow-into" it, look back after passing and make sure you have not capsized a kayaker.

Sound Signals:

The following maneuvering signals are used when vessels are in sight of one another or to announce a vessel's presence when vessels are in sight of one another.

- 1 short blast: I am altering course to starboard.
- 2 short blasts: I am altering course to port.
- 3 short blasts: I am operating astern propulsion.
- 1 prolonged blast: Power driven vessel underway in reduced visibility.
- 5 or more short blasts: Danger signal.

Sound Signals At Blind Corners:

Power vessels rounding a blind corner in areas routinely used by kayakers should indicate their approach with 1 PROLONGED BLAST.

Kayakers should immediately respond on their VHF radio giving a Security announcement on Channel 16 as follows: SECURITY, SECURITY, SECURITY, vessel rounding the blind corner, there is a kayaker (or group of kayaks) at _____ (location: such as 100 yards from point and 10 yards offshore).

Communications:

Channel 16 is the standard hailing and distress channel for vessels in Alaskan coastal waters. Initial contact is made on Channel 16, and then if more discussion is necessary the parties agree to switch to another channel. Channels 21 and 22 are for communication with the Coast Guard.

It is advisable that kayakers carry and know how to use a VHF radio. VHF radios require a station and operator's license. The best VHF radios for Alaskan coastal conditions are water repellent and have 5 watts of power.

Using a VHF Radio:

1. Listen to make sure no one else is speaking.
2. Establish contact on Channel 16 giving first the NAME of the boat you are calling (if know, or type of boat and description of its location "tour-boat approaching Point Decision,") THIS IS NAME (of your boat) and CALL SIGN. To avoid confusion, never reverse this sequence. You may repeat the name of the boat you are calling a few times, but do not repeat your name and call sign. Keep your call short. If the boat does not respond, wait two minutes before trying again unless it is an emergency.
3. When contact is established, switch to a working channel 9 if with a commercial boat; 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, and 78 for recreational boats. Listen to make sure no one else is using the channel. Communications should be short and about operational or safety concerns.
4. Sign off giving your NAME and CALL SIGN when you are finished on the working channel.

Making a "MAYDAY" Call:

"MAYDAY" calls are made only when one is in grave and immediate danger. Being weathered in or overdue are not MAYDAY situations. For less severe situations call the Coast Guard or harbormaster. Use VHF Channel 16.

Procedure:

- 1) On Channel 16 state: MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, THIS IS A KAYAK PARTY (repeated three times; normally the name and call sign of the vessel goes here, but kayaks have no name.)
- 2) WHERE you are. Give the most exact information possible.
- 3) WHAT is wrong (collision, sinking, injured person, etc.).
- 4) NUMBER of persons in party and the condition of any injured.
- 5) PRESENT SEAWORTHINESS of the kayaks.
- 6) DESCRIPTION of the boat (yellow single person kayak, etc.)
- 7) Give YOUR LISTENING FREQUENCY and schedule.
- 8) Conclude: THIS IS KAYAK (normally the name of the vessel goes here, but kayaks have no name). OVER.

Local Knowledge:

- Inexperienced kayakers often do not know where they are. Follow your charts and note the local names for points and bays.
- Never kayak in an unfamiliar area without a local chart or special map. Keep track of your location.
- When kayaking in an unfamiliar area, seek local knowledge even if you have a chart.
- It is advisable to fill out a trip plan and leave it at the harbor office.
- If you are in an unfamiliar area, check with the harbor staff about local high traffic areas, such as small boat ramp areas, cannery docks, and harbor entrances, where there might be a potential conflict. Try avoiding these areas. If you cannot avoid them, enter these areas with caution and try to stay out-of-the way of vessel traffic. If visibility is poor, you may wish to give a SECURITY call.

This guide was developed in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard. For more information call your local Coast Guard Marine Safety Office.

Contributors:

The Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association took the lead in developing this brochure and received invaluable help from the Knik Kayakers and Canoers. Over 80 businesses and individuals from Ketchikan to Kodiak participated in the scoping process, risk assessment and development of this brochure. Personnel from the U.S. Coast Guard in Juneau, Valdez, and Anchorage have provided support and assistance.

Notice

This guide is meant to complement and not replace the federal laws that govern maritime traffic. Prudent mariners should not rely on this guide as their only source of information about vessel traffic patterns, Rules of the Road, and safe boating practices in Alaska, and should at all times comply with applicable law.

The companies and agencies that have contributed to the publication of this guide expressly disclaim any liability or responsibility, direct or indirect, which may arise from the use of this guide, or reliance upon any information or recommendation in the guide, by any person or entity.